in the State of Jamu and Kashmir. It is also a fact that Amnesty has continued to turn a Nelson's eye to the root cause of the human rights abuses in the State viz. terrorism aided and abetted by Pakistan. It is often found that these allegations are sweeping and generalised in nature and in most of the cases exaggerated and grossly distorted.

(b) and (c) The Government of India have all along firmly denied these allegations. Immediate response to the allegations raised by Amnesty International including factual details of the specific incidents mentioned in their reports are given by the Government through our missions abroad who disseminate the same through press releases and direct contacts. The Government has also consistently been bringing to the notice of the international community the evidence of direct involvement of Pakistan in sponsoring terrorism in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Marine Aquarium

2627 SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA
SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH
SHRI HARADHAN ROY

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to set up a Marine Acquarium cum Research Centre at Digha West Bengal

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (CAPT. JAI NARAYAN PRASAD NISHAD) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The project consists of a Marine Acquarium and a Research Centre. The Research Centre is already operational. The construction of buildings for the Marine Acquarium is also completed. The contract for furnishing the Acquarium is to be executed in 3 stages. The first stage has been completed. The second stage includes collection, transportation, acclimatisation and introduction of marine specimens and the third stage includes training of the designated ZSI Staff members.

Economic Grant to Sikkim

2628 SHRI BHIM PRASAD DAHAL: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the reasons for ignoring Sikkim while granting Special Economic Grant to Hill States;

(b) whether a formal request was received by him from the Chief Minister of Sikkim to visit the State; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA) : (a) The Prime Minister visited all the 7 North-Eastern States between 22-27 October, 1996. At the conclusion of his visit, he announced at Guwahati on 27th October, 1996 a statement on New Initiatives for North Eastern Region. As his visit was limited to only North-Eastern States, the Statement has reference to the N.E. States only.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Question does not arise.

[Translation]

Production Cost of Rice

2629 SHRI NITISH KUMAR
SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the production cost of rice in India is higher than the other rice producing countries; and

(b) if so, the details of production cost of rice in the country as compared to other countries like Vietnam and Thailand?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) and (b). The costs of production of paddy for different countries are not strictly comparable due to differences in methodologies, the coverage of cost items, the Government interventions and support programmes and selection of appropriate exchange rates. However, the FAO Economic and Social Development Paper 101 titled 'A Comparison of the Cost of Producing Rice in Selected Countries' has presented costs in US$/ton of producing paddy for 1987-89 in respect of a few countries. The report does not include cost of production for India. However, the cost of production of paddy for India, worked out on the same pattern, is lower than that of most of the developed and developing countries in the world except a few countries like Indonesia, Nepal, Thailand and Philippines. The country wise position is as under :

Country	Cost (US$/Ton)
India	135
Thailand	98
Philippines	124
Nepal	96
Indonesia	82
Republic of Korea	939
Japan	1987
U.S.A.	195